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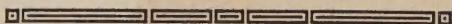


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THE CONFERENCE COURSE OF STUDY

*A Statement of the Plans and
Work of the General Conference
Commission on Courses of Study*



**WITH A DISCUSSION OF CRITICISMS
OF THE SAME**

Issued by the
**GENERAL CONFERENCE COMMISSION
ON COURSES OF STUDY**

AUGUST, 1918

Additional copies of this pamphlet can be secured by addressing the Secretary, Harris Franklin Rall, 714 Foster Street, Evanston, Illinois

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Introductory

There is no subject more vital to the church than the training of her leaders, and the importance of this subject increases with the years. One of the most important actions of the last General Conference was to entrust to a special Commission the direction of this work in relation to the conference courses of study. It was perhaps inevitable that there should be some misunderstanding and some criticism in connection with such a plan. All the more significant is the fact of the general approval that has come from the men who, next to the students, are most directly interested in this work, the fifteen hundred preachers who compose the Conference Boards of Examiners. These men, whose devoted service and intimate knowledge qualify them to speak, have been repeatedly invited by the Commission on Courses of Study to send in their opinions and personal conferences have been held with many of these Boards. Helpful suggestions have come from them and occasional criticisms of some detail, but no criticism of the general plan and no objection to any book on the score of its teaching has come to the Commission from any Board.

During this time objections, chiefly on doctrinal grounds, were raised in certain quarters. The Commission felt under no obligation to enter into public controversy over this matter. The Course of Study had been approved by the Board of Bishops in exact accordance with the plan arranged by the Board and with the provision of the General Conference. The bishops had given full opportunity to the complainants to present their objections. The Commission had met these objections in a statement made at the request of the bishops, and the approval of the Course had then been reaffirmed. The attacks that were being made were thus quite as much attacks upon the Board of Bishops as upon the Commission, and, indeed, the books attacked included several placed by the bishops in the previous course.

There are reasons, however, why a full and clear statement upon the situation should be issued now by the Commission.

The important work of training our preachers, with whose supervision the Commission is charged, demands the intelligent understanding and hearty cöoperation of the entire ministry of the Church. To this end it seems desirable, not only to correct the misstatements and unfounded criticisms which have been systematically circulated, but especially to set forth the aims of the Commission and the character of the work that is being done. Suggestion and criticism are both welcomed by the Commission. For the sake of the Church and in justice to itself it simply asks that these be based upon an understanding of its plans and a direct acquaintance with the books of the Course, including the five volumes of the Directions and Helps.

The first part of this pamphlet will be devoted to a statement concerning the origin of the present plan, its underlying principles, and the methods by which it is being carried out. The second part will discuss the criticisms that have been offered. A final section will make mention of some tasks that are waiting.

I.

The New Plan and Its Meaning

The Origin of the Plan

The present plan arose in the minds of men who felt that the Church was facing a serious situation which was not being adequately considered. First of all was the fact of untrained leaders in the Church. In twenty-five years, college students had multiplied fourfold in this country, and high school students had increased from three hundred thousand to a million and a half. The church was facing ever greater tasks, and we were realizing that every forward movement in the last analysis depended upon the leadership of our preachers. Meanwhile the standard in our conferences was falling rather than rising. Roughly speaking, in this day of increasing demands half of our candidates did not have a college training and a fifth of them had not even finished high school. Here was a conference in a strong Methodist state of the mid-west, where out of twenty-five applicants only six could meet the suggested minimum of a high school course. Here was another strong conference in the north Atlantic section receiving twelve candidates with but one from college and with nine having only high school training or less. Five of that number ranged in age from thirty-five to forty-four and these five averaged only an eighth-grade education. With this went another startling fact. Opposite four thousand Methodist charges in this country there stood in the Minutes the words: To be supplied. And in most cases these were supplied by men who could not reach even the low standard indicated above.

The second fact was the comparative neglect of the Church in connection with the training of these unprepared men. We had urged our young men to go to school and had raised millions for college and seminary, but three fourths of these candidates did not have college and seminary training. What were we doing for these? For the one fourth we were spending in our seminaries alone perhaps a quarter of a million a year, for the three fourths we were spending nothing at all. We gave them no instructors and no educational supervision. We furnished them a list of books and then told them to go to it. They were untrained men and they had to work alone, but we prepared no special texts and no helps for their need. Often we required

of them the study of difficult works, prepared for college graduates who had in addition the help of their instructors. Once in four years the list of books was revised, and that was about the extent of the attention which the general church gave to the problem. An occasional far-seeing and self-sacrificing Board of Examiners strove to remedy the situation by furnishing questions and outlines and holding mid-year institutes, but the above was the rule.

The fundamental error here was plain. The conference course of study was an educational proposition but it had never been treated as such. The educators of the church had passed it by; they were interested in particular institutions. The Board of Education had definitely limited itself to problems of education as connected with institutions. The bishops had their hands full of many duties and had been charged simply with the matter of the selection of books. Meanwhile the young men who were dependent upon this course formed three fourths of our candidates, and the problem of the church, especially in small town and open country, was growing more and more desperate for the lack of rightly trained leaders. The task was plain. It was to lift the course from being a set of examinations and make it a means of effective training.

The first requisite seemed clear: constant and careful educational supervision. Essentially the problem was the same as that of one of our seminaries. It was not that of selecting books or determining theological standards, but of educating men. If it was not possible to have a president and a theological faculty then at least there could be a commission which could give continued attention to the task, not merely determining the course of study, but preparing plans and materials to aid the students and coöperating with the Board of Examiners.

The general scheme now in force was developed by conference of the heads of our theological schools, after consultation with bishops, district superintendents, pastors, and educators. It was presented to the Methodist college presidents at two succeeding annual meetings and approved by them. After careful consideration by the large Committee on Itinerancy it was adopted by the last General Conference.

Organizing the Course

The Commission appointed by the bishops labored under decided difficulties because of limitation of time. Its plan can best be understood by indicating how it proceeded. It began, not with the selection of books, but with the broad question of

subjects to be studied and their arrangement in the course. Its conclusions were something like this:

Subject Matter

1. The preacher must know his Bible. That is his inspiration, his instrument, the source of his message week after week.

2. If the preacher is to understand the Christian religion and the Christian church, if he is to have breadth of outlook and be saved from errors, he must know Christianity in its history. He must study the church at large to be a catholic Christian, and his own church that he may serve it with intelligent loyalty.

3. He must study Christian doctrine. He must see the great truths of the Christian faith, that he may know their meaning for life and preach them with power, building up men at once in grace and in truth as these have come to us in Jesus Christ.

4. He must be fitted for his practical task as servant of the church and a leader of the church in the work of the kingdom. Foremost stands the work of preaching, but hand in hand with this come the questions of evangelism, of religious training, church organization, pastoral duty, missions and social service.

Arrangement of Subjects

Then came the question of the arrangement of these studies in the Course, and the general conclusions were about as follows:

1. Simplify the work as much as possible, not having more than four subjects for study each year. Do not try to have all subjects represented each year. Let each year stand for certain special studies, and let the collateral reading be related to these.

2. Bible study, however, may well be given each year. Not only its importance warrants that, but the fact that such study will help the young preacher constantly in his actual pulpit work, and that such study of the *Bible*, not of books about the Bible which have been our staple hitherto, will make the Course itself vital and interesting.

3. Arrange the subjects in some pedagogical order. The more difficult doctrinal studies may well come later, the student being prepared for these by biblical and historical work.

4. Give adequate attention to the practical branches. These concern the actual tasks with which the young preacher is engaged. Take up one such branch each year, so that each year's Course will call the student to apply practically what he is learning and to master one field of his calling (preaching and pastoral work, Sunday School, missions, social service).

5. The minister's greatest single task is preaching. While emphasizing homiletics in one year, let us make each year bear upon this question, and let us show the student how to make his other studies bear fruit for his preaching.

6. For personal inspiration and help, let us have each year one biography, taking up in turn the founder of Methodism, its first great American leader, the great Protestant reformer, and a representative preacher of the modern church.

Selection of Books

The task of selecting text-books came last. It was exceedingly difficult. It was necessary to keep constantly in view the fact that the Course was being prepared for young men who had not had full school advantages, of whom probably one fourth had not even completed the high school course, and who were under the added disadvantage of pursuing their studies with no aid from teachers. To fling at the heads of these young men learned volumes designed for college graduates would seem to be as cruel as it was stupid. The ideal plainly was a series of texts arranged specially for such work, a plan which is the basis of all successful correspondence schools. But no such books were available. It was necessary to choose the best that could be had, leaving to the future the preparation of texts specially suited to the course.

Important Features of the New Plan

It was here that a unique element in the plan was introduced, the scheme of hand-books known as *Directions and Helps*, one of which accompanies each year of the Course. The name indicates their purpose. These little volumes take the place of the teacher. They seek to teach the student first of all how to study. Even in our colleges large numbers of students are ignorant of that art. And yet that is one of the greatest single advantages of a course of training, not merely to acquire information, but to learn how to study. A large number of our young men approach the Course without knowing how to study, and leave it without having learned this. And that is one reason why they so often cease real study as soon as they finish their Course. The present plan seeks to teach these men how to study. The *Directions and Helps* contain, first, General Suggestions devoted mainly to the question, how to study. To each book of the Course a section is devoted giving the student suggestions for study, explanations, references to other books, and directions as to his work.

Required written work forms a vital part of this plan. The purpose of this is not to exact elaborate and original essays, but to train the student to think. Mere reading or memorizing is not study. Only as the student thinks and expresses his thoughts is there real study, and the written work aims to secure this.

To this principle of activity on the part of the student, the present plan joins that of *interest*. There is little profit where there is no interest. The interest of the student is aroused in various ways. At each step the Directions and Helps point out the importance of the study in question. Wherever possible the connection is made directly with the actual work of the young preacher, the fact being kept in mind that almost all the students are pastors at the same time. Every encouragement is given in connection with the practical studies to test and apply them in the actual work of the charge. The student is required to outline the condition of his own Sunday School, to report his own community survey or constituency list, and this is handed in as part of the required work. There are great possibilities of development of the plan on this side, that will enable us to bring our young preachers into line with the most advanced and effective movements in the church. The Directions and Helps afford a flexible instrument for this, for they are not necessarily limited to comment upon the books of the Course and they can easily be modified.

The *homiletic work* affords an even better illustration of the way in which the new plan, through the Directions and Helps, interests the student by tying up his studies to his work and making them immediately fruitful. Homiletics as a special study is taken up in the first year. But the work of preaching is too important to have this study limited to one year, and the art of preaching is not acquired from the mere study of a text. For each year, therefore, the Directions and Helps have a special section devoted to *Homiletical Suggestions*. These Suggestions show the young preacher how he can utilize the material of his studies in preaching, the individual books being considered with specific illustrations and suggestions. By this method the student's interest is gained for the course of study while at the same time he is learning the important lesson of how to make his reading bear upon his preaching. Finally, he is required in connection with this work to hand in outlines, sermons, and other homiletic exercises, enabling the examiner to give him helpful criticism and advice throughout the Course.

The last named point suggests another element in the new plan: The endeavor to change what has commonly been a mere

board of examiners into a *board of instruction*. The disciplinary name, Board of Examiners, shows the limitation of the old conception. What is needed is a group of men who will serve not merely as examiners, but as instructors, counselors, and friends. The new plan strongly urges the establishment of summer schools where students and examiners will meet. But the special opportunity for such helpful relation is given through the required written work. Where this is sent in by the student, as suggested, at intervals throughout the year, it can be made the basis for constant helpful criticism and suggestion.

The Relative Importance of the Various Studies

One of the most difficult problems facing the Commission was to determine the relative attention to be given to different subjects. At no point is there likely to be greater differences of opinion, and here, as elsewhere, the Commission asks for suggestions and seeks to learn from experience. As might be expected, those who have expressed themselves are far from agreeing with one another. Some questions rest upon a misunderstanding of what the Course really contains, and certain proposals are made without thought of the Course as a whole and would result in intolerable burdens for the student. A few questions will bring out the main points.

Is enough attention given to *Methodist history and doctrines*? The question is easily answered. As at present constituted the Course contains the following: The Discipline, with a very thorough treatment occupying over one half of the first volume of the Directions and Helps; Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection; Selections from the Writings of John Wesley, a volume of over four hundred pages, including ten sermons and thirteen of Wesley's most important writings on Methodist doctrine and practice; The Life of John Wesley; The Life of Francis Asbury; Stevens' History of Methodism, in three volumes; Sheldon's System of Christian Doctrine, as a standard work of Methodist theology; four volumes of the Methodist Review, presenting current Methodist thought. This makes in all thirteen volumes, with the rather staggering total of about six thousand pages.

Has too much attention been given to *the social question*? As a matter of fact, the number of such books was reduced as compared with the last quadrennium, even if one were to include Soares which has now been dropped and which was in reality a Bible study text. As against Peabody, Rauschenbusch, Patten, Brown, and Earp, we now have Ellwood, Rauschenbusch, and

Ward, and the last named (on Social Evangelism) might be placed in the practical theology list.

But is not too much attention given to *practical theology*? In the general field of practical theology the present Course contains two books on evangelism, one on worship, four which deal with pastoral methods and parish problems, and one general work (Quayle, *The Pastor-Preacher*). But these eight books taken together are not equal in size to two of the books on theology in the Course. Six of them together are about equal in size to Sheldon's *Christian Doctrine*. The Commission felt the urgent need of help in this field for the young preacher, the untrained man who is thrown into the work with little preparation and with no "senior preacher" any longer at hand for counsel. Just in this field, however, it is difficult to get satisfactory manuals, especially in the matter of church organization and pastoral work, and this accounts for the selection of a number of smaller books.

It has been suggested that too little attention is given to *doctrine*, and that this is postponed to the close of the Course. Note the facts. There are seven volumes devoted to the statement and defense of Christian truth: two by Wesley (*Plain Account and Selections*), and those by Strickland, Bowne, Simpson, Sheldon, and Clarke. In addition, special attention is given to our Articles of Religion in connection with the study of the Discipline. Counting the Discipline, three of these books come in the required study for admission on trial, that is, at the very beginning of the Course. These three bring a clear statement of the principles of religion as Methodism conceives them, and are placed here so that these may be understood by the candidate before he applies for admission into the ranks of the Methodist ministry. The other works are placed in the last two years. The biblical and historical branches furnish necessary preparation for the study of doctrine, and for this last named more difficult discipline the student is better fitted after a year or two of study.

It needs no debate to make plain that the matter could never be settled to the satisfaction of all. It is interesting to consider where the Commission would have been led if it had followed some of the advice that has been given. Thus one veteran theological professor thinks that a knowledge of the Greek Testament is indispensable, even for the young men who may not have graduated from high school or college, and that with this should go the study of commentaries like those of the International Critical series. The same writer, criticising the present course in the matter of theology, thinks that "a mastery of Hodge, A. H. Strong, Shedd, or others (even a Roman Catholic like Schee-

ben) would be of incalculable value." Pope's three volumes are then commended and the statement added: "But let these be *in addition* to our own Raymond, Terry, Curtis." Sixteen volumes of theology are proposed here. Assuming that but one non-Methodist in this list were to be studied, eliminating the Roman Catholic and all the Calvinists but Hodge, leaving out Pope, and dropping Sheldon, this would still give us five thousand pages of heavy theological material for these young men, hundreds of whom have not even completed the high school. The "mastery of Hodge" alone would involve the study of over twenty-two hundred pages.

II.

The Criticism of the Doctrinal Teaching

There has been but one attempt made to formulate specific charges against the Course of Study on doctrinal grounds and to offer definite evidence. This has been done by the New Jersey Conference. In a few other instances there have been general accusations, inspired evidently by the propaganda of this conference and, indeed, claimed by the latter as a result of its work. The following discussion then will be mainly limited to the material approved or issued by this conference. This material consists of an address prepared by the Rev. Harold Paul Sloan of the New Jersey Conference for the New Brunswick District Preachers Meeting, and later adopted *in toto* by the New Jersey Conference in 1917 (referred to as pamph. 1). A new edition issued in 1918 by this conference includes in addition to this the address to the Board of Bishops delivered by Mr. Sloan as spokesman for the New Jersey Conference, and resolutions adopted by several conferences (referred to as pamph. 2).

These addresses of Mr. Sloan are a curious combination of misstatements, garbled quotations, and errors in interpretation, all together being offered as the evidence in support of sweeping charges. It is only fair to assume that the members of the New Jersey Conference were without direct personal knowledge of the Course which they were condemning and were misled by these statements which were so positive and by this evidence which seemed so authentic. That such was the case seems un-

doubted. Mr. Sloan himself confessed that he did not think three men of the New Brunswick District had read the books in question. And a challenge on the floor of the New Jersey Conference in 1917 revealed the fact that not five per cent of those who condemned the Course and approved these findings had read the books. This does not, of course, relieve the conference of responsibility in making such charges of heresy, and of condemning men without even a pretense of examining directly the evidence in the case. Upon protest being made, Mr. Sloan corrected a few of the garbled quotations, claiming that they were due to typewriter's errors. Other garbled quotations, however, were allowed to stand, and appear in the second pamphlet.

Where truth and untruth and half-truth are so intermingled, the examination is wont to be tedious. If it is to be done at all, however, it must be done with some thoroughness. The Commission urges that those who are interested refer to the books themselves. It believes that such a reading would be quite sufficient without detailed argument. In this argument, however, we will seek to quote not only accurately, but fully enough so as to give a fair representation, for "A garbled quotation may be the most effectual perversion of an author's meaning." We will first consider the charges made in the original pamphlet which was distributed broadcast in the attempt at agitation.

The Books on Doctrine

The following books on doctrine are in the Course as now constituted: Sheldon's System of Christian Doctrine, Clarke's Outline of Theology, Simpson's Fact of Christ, Strickland's Foundations of Christian Belief, and Bowne's Studies in Christianity. As representing specifically Methodist teaching, we have Wesley's Plain Account, Selections from the Writings of John Wesley, edited by Bishop Welch, and the discussion of the Articles of Religion in the Directions and Helps. Let us turn to Pamphlet 1, which contains the original charges and the principal evidence offered.

First of all, unqualified approval is given to "Professor Sheldon's splendid work," and of this and "The Fact of Christ" we read that "these are strong and clear interpretations of the historic Christian conception." Professor Strickland's volume is also commended for its "clear emphasis upon the supernatural." Naturally the "Plain Account" is approved, and presumably this would extend to the Selections from Wesley just added to the Course, although it is to be feared that some of Wesley's ex-

pressions would be considered, to say the least, rather unguarded ("I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions Give me an humble, gentle lover of God and man." Works, V. 173. See also Welch's Selections, new edition, pp. 172, 175, 209, 293, 302, etc.).

Thus five out of the seven volumes of the Course in which the student gets his training in doctrine receive the approval of these critics. Further, all the books on doctrine "to be studied" are in this list which has passed the scrutiny of Mr. Sloan and the New Jersey Conference. The two books that are left are for collateral reading. A consideration of the Directions and Helps will show that one of these, Clarke, is to be studied only in constant connection with Sheldon, the student being referred to Sheldon at every point. And Sheldon's work with its six hundred solid pages, so highly approved is *the* work on systematic theology in the Course, as it has been for the last ten years.

This leaves then only Clarke and Bowne. Now, though Clarke heads the list of books condemned, and though the New Jersey Conference refers repeatedly to "detailed criticisms" and "pages specifically named," there is not a single specific charge made against Professor Clarke in this first pamphlet. There is the vague general declaration "that the outline given of the New Theology in the previous chapter is a fairly accurate account" of the teachings of Clarke and Bowne, but not even a single passage is cited in attempted support. Some strictures by Professor Faulkner and by the second pamphlet will be taken up later.

One book on doctrine is thus left, Bowne's Studies in Christianity. It is interesting to note that Professor Bowne is the only Methodist preacher represented in the Course upon whom it was ever formally attempted to fasten the charge of heresy. If the New York East Conference erred in this matter at all, it was on the side of the patience with which it received the charges made against this distinguished member of its body. The strongest men in the conference formed the body appointed to hear the charges, and the acquittal was an absolute vindication of Professor Bowne. To-day the thoughtful men of our church, including those of most conservative position, are realizing increasingly the service that this man rendered in the defense of a Christianity truly supernatural and unique. Against Professor Bowne now we have one specific charge for which a reference is given. And this is the indictment: Professor Bowne

in his closing chapter "vigorously assails the church for her conservatism, and appeals for larger liberty for himself and those in sympathy with him."

It is not to be denied that some of Professor Bowne's strictures upon some elements in the church are rather severe, as certain quotations will indicate. "When the professional ark-saver begins to make rhetorical flourishes about truth and truthfulness, he soon gets out of his depth An illustration: A ministerial acquaintance of mine some time ago was on a committee to report on the orthodoxy of a certain book. When the committee met this person asked how many of the committee had read the book in question. The question proved embarrassing, and he insisted upon an answer. Then it turned out that four men of the seven composing the committee had never seen the book . . . Such a thing could not have happened in any secular court under the sun." But such incidental remarks, though rather severe, would hardly be construed by the church at large as a denial of the historic faith.

Here then is the situation concerning the books on doctrine: unqualified approval for five of the seven books; vague general accusations against the other two without attempt at bringing evidence. And let it be remembered these are the books chosen for teaching of doctrine, to which the student will naturally and properly turn for guidance in these matters.

Bible Study Texts

Turning now to the field of Bible study, the pamphlet admits that "in the department of the Bible, the course is, generally speaking, safe." The books by Professors Eiselen, Hayes, Smyth, Knudson, and George Adam Smith (two) are referred to in commendatory phrases. Six of the nine books in this department are thus accounted for. To one volume no reference is made. Only two out of the seven are criticized.

The consideration of Professor Soares' book might be omitted, since this book was dropped by action of the Commission in 1917, taken in the interests of harmony. It should, however, be stated explicitly, that Mr. Sloan's arguments here as so often elsewhere are a combination of misrepresentation and misquotation. A few of the arguments may be taken up as typical of the whole.

"The call of Abraham," Mr. Sloan says, "is practically set aside." The fact is, it is not once referred to. Why should it be, in a book on social institutions?

"The grandeur of the Bible is explained by the natural insight of great personalities, thus excluding inspiration," says Mr. Sloan. Wrong. Soares declares, that in the case of the Hebrew prophet "the fundamentally significant fact was his religious experience" (214).

In some cases Mr. Sloan's material can be disposed of very simply. In items 6, 7, 9, and 13 (pamphlet, p. 18) Mr. Sloan quotes as from Soares' words which are nowhere found in the text and which do not represent the author's position. But this misquotation is no more serious a lapse than such flagrant misrepresentations as are contained, for example, in items 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, etc. To illustrate: Dr. Soares speaks of Jeremiah's passage on the new covenant as "one of the noblest words of prophecy," and points out how the prophet, who had seen the failure of trying to make a nation good by mere laws, "saw that this would come about as a result of individual and national regeneration" (Soares, 261). Mr. Sloan reports Soares thus: "Jeremiah's 'new covenant' is reduced to 'patriotic optimism'" (pamph., p. 18). Incidentally, the phrase "patriotic optimism," given by Sloan as a quotation, is not found in Soares at all.

Space forbids the answer of the other arguments, and with the book no longer in the Course this is not necessary. The Commission simply asks that those interested read the book itself.

With Soares out of the Course, there remains as the only biblical work criticized, the New Testament History by Professor Rall. What are the charges? 1. That the author "presents the various gospel narratives of the Nativity and Resurrection as irreconcilable accounts." This is what the author really says: Giving the birth stories as they appear in the gospels, he refers to the differences between them, and adds: "How far they can be reconciled is not really an important matter. They agree as to the parents of the child, the place of the birth and the later home, and the wonderful manner and meaning of that birth. What is more important is to appreciate the beautiful simplicity of the story, especially as told by Luke. There is no stronger witness to its essential truth" (34). As to the resurrection, reference is made to "the apparent differences in these accounts. . . . Only by violence can these accounts be harmonized *in their details* . . . While it is not possible to reconcile these differences now, neither is it necessary . . . The fundamental fact is clearly held by all these writers. The very discrepancies emphasize the central agreement" (140, 141). The author clearly states his belief in the historicity of these accounts. The great error then seems to be his failure to close his eyes to the

facts and to accept the doctrine of verbal inspiration and absolute inerrancy. But on the doctrine of verbal inerrancy the critics are referred to Dr. Sheldon (pp. 142ff.) whom they so strongly endorsed.

2. "He denies to St. John the authorship of the Fourth Gospel." Not true. See New Testament History, 289.

3. He "holds that the book has a very limited value as a source of facts. Thus he writes: 'The Fourth Gospel preserves a tradition of how the crisis came,' reducing St. John's wonderful sixth chapter to an unreliable tradition." Here the pamphlet perverts the author's meaning by inserting the word unreliable. The story is used here by the author to supplement the synoptic account simply because it is considered reliable.

4. "Again he says, 'The Fourth Gospel is a book of sermons, a product of St. Paul's theology, and the abiding vitality of the truth of Christ.'" The truth of Christ and the theology of Paul would, it might be supposed, form pretty good sources for any writing. As a matter of fact, however, this is still another of Mr. Sloan's garbled quotations. Here are the author's words: "The Gospel is a great confession of faith, a great sermon like one of Paul's. The words and deeds of Jesus are like a window, through which the evangelist seeks to show us his vision of the eternal. He is neither biographer nor theologian; he is a preacher. Whatever he writes he sets forth that we 'may believe,' and that we 'may have life in his name.' Over against the heresies of his day, he sets forth Jesus as eternal Son of God and yet as true man." "That such a book should come from the closing years of the first century is testimony, not only to the abiding influence of Paul's teaching, but even more to the abiding power of the spirit of Christ" (287-290).

The closing statements of the criticism are equally baseless. Dr. Rall "excludes an objective work of redemption." Not true: see p. 136. "Jesus' purpose to die, a late idea," even in the last week he "hoped to win the people by his teaching." For correct statement see pp. 113, 118. "Jesus' ministry exclusively one of teaching and inspiration." Not so; see p. 136. Dr. Rall's History has been used now for several years as a text in the leading colleges of our Church and the Church South. No such criticisms have come from any of the teachers employing it.

Social Service Texts

Turning now to the books on social service, we find two volumes criticized, those of Professors Rauschenbusch and Ellwood. Rauschenbusch was in the Course by selection of the Board of

Bishops for two quadrenniums before the appointment of the present Commission. It is hardly clear, therefore, why this should be cited in support of a plea to reverse the action of the last General Conference and return to the original plan. The Commission has, however, made one important change in the situation. In the Directions and Helps it points out clearly for the student, as was not done before, not merely the value of this volume, but also the fact that it has been criticized and the need of discrimination in its study. "We do not study him for details either of biblical interpretation or of theology." In this point, therefore, the present Course marks an advance.

As regards Professor Ellwood, the one charge made against him is that he "assumes the truth of the theory of gradual evolution." Professor Ellwood, let it be noted, does not stand for a naturalistic philosophy, for a mechanical, or non-theistic, evolution. His whole emphasis is upon the ideal factors in human society, the ethical and religious, and this is what makes his work so valuable in a Course for preachers. As a matter of fact, he does not discuss the theory of evolution at all. It is simply in the background, as an assumption. Here, then, is the astonishing demand, that a book on sociology be rejected because its author holds to the idea of human society as in a state of development! There is no other charge raised against Ellwood.

The Case of McMurry

The spirit of hypercriticism illustrated here is seen in the case of McMurry's *How to Study*. This work is not theological in any sense, but aims to teach the student how to study. A single introductory paragraph in one chapter (p. 246) refers to the doctrine of total depravity by way of illustration. On this ground, and this alone, the exclusion of the book from the Course is demanded. But that is not all. A reading of McMurry and of Mr. Sloan's references on pp. 12, 16, shows a garbled quotation given by Mr. Sloan on p. 12 (not corrected in the later issue of the New Jersey Conference), and a misrepresentation of thought in both cases. McMurry speaks not of depravity but of "*total depravity*" (rejected by Sheldon also, 322). What he is opposing is the mediæval ascetic conception, whose logical expression is the monastery, and the maxims and exercises of Loyola. What he stands for is the method of Jesus, who came that men might have life, and the principle of Jesus, "The Spirit quickeneth." "The object of education must be attained by quickening to the utmost, rather than by annihilating, the self," is McMurry's summary. All of which neither excludes the idea

of native depravity, nor the needed work of the Holy Spirit as the quickener and life giver. A casual allusion in one passage was the only ground for the demanded elimination of this book. The absurdity of this situation apparently dawned upon the critics and this name was crossed out from the list of books to be excluded, though the criticism and misrepresentation still stand.

Books on Religious Education

So far we have found surprisingly little basis to support the sweeping general accusations made against the Course. Five of the seven books on doctrine are approved in this original pamphlet of the New Jersey Conference, the only charge being a trifling complaint against Bowne, and of the biblical books now in the Course only one is criticized and that on utterly inadequate grounds. We come now to the final group of books, those on religious education, and these apparently are the chief ground of concern.

A little study shows that the controversy here raised has nothing new in it. Exactly the same attack has been directed by the New Jersey Conference in the past against our Board of Sunday Schools and its publications as well as against the Book Concern. The General Conference has had occasion, directly and indirectly, to pass upon this question several times, and always with the same result. Nor has there been any change so far as the Course of Study is concerned. One of the books attacked, that of Meyer, was in the preceding Course. Bushnell and Pattee in the last Course gave exactly the same teaching. The general position taken is that which is common to practically the whole modern Sunday School movement, though especially in harmony with the position of Methodism. The book by Weigle, for example, which takes precisely the same position as Meyer, Athearn, and Coe, is one of the books that has been officially endorsed by the conservative International Sunday School Association. Apparently the appointment of a Commission was hailed as giving opportunity to those who did not wish to attack the Board of Bishops as such, though they forgot that the bishops had approved this Course exactly as it had previously those prepared by its own committee.

Before the issue is stated, however, some misunderstandings and misrepresentations must be cleared away. These writers in the Course of Study do not stand for any training that is opposed to or excludes the work of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Sloan himself admits that this is their teaching, that "education includes the influence of the Holy Ghost" (pamph. 1, p. 11). They do

not deny native depravity or the need of regeneration for every human life; they know that man is not only incomplete but sinful. The question is: What is the status of the child and how is the work of the Holy Spirit done?

The writers in the Course of Study hold that children are born in the kingdom of God. The forces of evil are with them and in them from the beginning, but so is also the Spirit of God. The capacity for good is there with the tendency to sin. They may be brought up in the kingdom, taught from the beginning to consider themselves children of God, in the measure of their unfolding capacity taught to love and obey God, turning back to God in repentance and trust when they sin as older disciples must.

A very different position is that implied in the criticisms of these pamphlets. This position is made clearer by reference to a book on *The Child and the Church*, written by Mr. Sloan. We quote from this book since its author was made the official spokesman of the New Jersey Conference before the Board of Bishops, and since the only statement made by this conference is in the form of Mr. Sloan's addresses. The position taken by Mr. Sloan in this book is the one he has assumed in the New Jersey Conference pamphlets.

"That all children are born in the Kingdom of God, and that they remain in it until by personal transgression they have separated themselves from it," Mr. Sloan repudiates as impossible because "contrary to the teaching of natural depravity," and as "psychologically absurd" (*The Child and the Church*, 58). Of course the child cannot then in any real sense be a member of the church of Christ. "To the Church Invisible, the actual body of Christ, the child has no more relation than any other unholy probationary personality." It may have a relation to the visible church, but this must not be considered membership (58, 59). The child then is corrupt and wholly so. When Jesus says of little children, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," he simply has in mind their "humility, simplicity, and trustfulness." And we must not exaggerate the meaning of this. These traits "are purely impersonal, and therefore morally of no more significance than a good memory" (p. 19).

But what about the regenerating work of the Spirit? Why, that is dependent upon faith, and faith seems quite clearly a grown-up affair. It is not that simple trust and obedience which can come in earliest life, "a trustful self-surrender to the highest ideal that is known" which becomes a "pledge of the same kind of surrender to the highest ideal in fact" (Sheldon, 438, 439).

It is a rather mature and theological affair, involving at least some recognition of a theory of the atonement. There must be a "faith in the atonement of Christ's death," children "must see and trust Christ's death as the atonement for sin" (pamph. 12). The question at issue is not one of the significance of Christ's death, but that this must be apprehended before the child can begin the Christian life. Without this there is no real faith, without faith no regeneration, and so the child remains outside the kingdom, a sinner "like any other unholy probationary personality," until maturer years enable it to grasp at least the elements of this doctrine and assent to it. As to what becomes of the children who die as "unholy" infants, those who hold this position which out-Calvin's Calvinism do not dare to accept the logic of their theology.

There is no gospel for childhood here. For the words of Jesus we must substitute, Except ye grow up and become like old people, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God. The work of the Holy Spirit is here narrowed and limited in a way that falls far short of the Christian position. In the first years of life the forces of evil have access to the child, but the Spirit of God is excluded. He must wait until the child can grasp doctrinal statement. And infant baptism thus becomes a mere ceremony of parental dedication.

Whatever individual voices may have declared in the past, the position of the Methodist Episcopal Church to-day is clear on this point, and it is shared by almost all of the great Christian bodies. "We hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the Kingdom of God, and therefore graciously entitled to Baptism." "We regard all children who have been baptized as placed in visible covenant relation to God and as preparatory members under the special care and supervision of the Church"—"the Church," not some external organization, but the real Church of our Lord of which Methodism is a part. For a clear and thoroughly-reasoned statement of this position we refer to the able work of Bishop Cooke on Christianity and Childhood, a volume written twenty-seven years ago but apparently needed still.

In the baptism of the infant we employ water, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. That can have only one meaning, if it be not a senseless form: it expresses our faith that God's Spirit has access to the child. Through mother love, through father care, through the first prayers learned at God's best altar, a mother's knee, through Sunday School and church and Christian friendship, God's Spirit is working upon God's little children. Re-

ligious education is simply the effort, by understanding God's laws as seen in the nature of the child, and God's truth as revealed in Christ, through the service of Christian men and women to furnish the clearest, freest channels by which God can reach and mould the life of the child. And the whole Bible, and the whole history of the Christian Church, is witness to the fact that God has chosen to work through such channels.

The New Jersey Conference Pamphlet of 1918

The pamphlet just discussed was issued in a new edition in 1918. It is characteristic of the superficial nature of this production and its indifference to accuracy, that while a few of the garbled quotations were corrected, no confession of error was made, no effort to correct these errors in places where the first pamphlet was sent, and other garbled quotations and misstatements were allowed to stand. The additional matter is composed mainly of an address before the bishops made by Mr. Sloan as the official spokesman of the New Jersey Conference. Mr. Sloan's method is apt to be misleading for those who have only his statements. There are sweeping declarations about the teachings of the "New Theology," with intimations or assertions that the writers in the Course of Study are adherents of this position. But when it comes to definite evidence the charges have to be largely modified or even eliminated. In most of the attempts at bringing evidence, the pamphlet shows the same mental inability to grasp the truth and indifference to correct representation. We will look at the main charges and evidence.

1. We read that the new theology denies that "the Bible is the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice." This is one of the five "principal differences between Historic Christianity and the New Theology as it is set forth in the proposed Course." This charge is placed in the forefront where everyone will see it. When it comes to the definite evidence about which the manifestoes of the New Jersey Conference so constantly speak, Mr. Sloan himself has to admit that "*No book in the Course sets forth this view of the Bible definitely*" (2nd pamph., p. 5). In the effort to rescue the situation, two references are given. One is a passing allusion, a single sentence contained in the volume on home missions, in which Dr. Douglas says that modern religious education uses the Bible as a "book of social invention and adventure, and not as a repository of doctrine or a completed code of social laws." The other reference is to Bowne. Bowne knows, and states, that the Bible brings both doctrine and ethics. But he knows that its great meaning is not as a system of

theology or a set of laws. "It does not meet the questions of life," says Bowne, "by theological or philosophical explanations; it rather outflanks them by a revelation of God which makes it possible to trust and love him." And to this passage (Bowne, 24, 25), Mr. Sloan refers as proof of dangerous teaching! What we have is simply a man obsessed with an ancient scholasticism and imagining that it is orthodoxy.

2. "Historical Christianity teaches the fall and natural depravity of man; the New Theology denies both" (2nd pamph., p. 4). Bowne, Clarke, and Coe are here accused. The plain fact is that not one of these writers takes this position. Mr. Sloan quotes Dr. Coe as saying that "The doctrine of natural depravity is an embarrassment." These words are nowhere found in Coe, though this falsified quotation is repeated in the second pamphlet (p. 24). Nor is the thought his. On the contrary, Coe assumes this doctrine, and refers to the "facts back of this doctrine obvious to any sober observer of life" (p. 49). What he objects to is "the doctrine of *total* depravity in its unrelieved form, a form which it no longer bears" (p. 49). Dr. Clarke says unequivocally: "What the race connection perpetuates is depravity, or corruption of the common stock of mankind" (p. 243). As to Dr. Bowne, there is not a passage in his volume which even suggests a denial of the fact of sinful tendencies and the guilt of human sin. As to Drs. Athearn and Meyer we have again reckless statements but not a word quoted in evidence. All Mr. Sloan can say is that the denial of native depravity is the "necessary basis" of their whole plan of religious education.

Mr. Sloan's position is plain. For him, all Methodists who declare with our Discipline, that children are "members of the kingdom of God," and may be brought up within the kingdom instead of first wandering away and then being converted, are denying this doctrine. As a matter of fact he is, perhaps unconsciously, contending for the Augustinian-Calvinistic conception of *total* depravity and an "original sin" that involves guilt. For the repudiation of this position, and for a statement in harmony with the men whom he criticises, let him read Sheldon, 322, and Sheldon's predecessor in the Course, Miley, I, 456, as well as the volume of Bishop Cooke already referred to. But then Mr. Sloan, the theological spokesman of the New Jersey Conference, has a poor opinion of both Miley and Sheldon. In his little volume on *The Child and the Church*, he criticises Dr. Miley for his teaching on native depravity, and declares that "Dr. Miley has moved from the Reformed toward the Roman position" (*The Child and the Church*, p. 34). While of Dr. Sheldon he says:

"Comparing Dr. Sheldon with Dr. Miley we find the only difference to be that the former's statement is less thorough than the latter's" (*The Child and the Church*, p. 34). With these facts before us, it is not surprising that Mr. Sloan cannot approve the Course of Study. It is rather surprising, though, that a Methodist conference should hand itself over to such leadership.

3. As regards the atonement, or that "Christ's death was a vicarious sacrifice," so far from being denied, this is set forth at length, notably by Dr. Clarke (347-354). What Mr. Sloan apparently misses is the theory of penal satisfaction. But that theory is repudiated by Dr. Sheldon as it was by Professor Miley before him. Bowne and Clarke are in essential agreement with Sheldon, though Clarke in characteristic fashion gives a fuller statement of the meaning of Christ's death for the believer and in this regard will be more helpful to the average preacher. As regards Rall's *New Testament History*, we have the declaration that "he only sets forth the moral influence theory." The fact is, no theory is set forth at all. This is a history, not a systematic theology, and no such discussion would have been in place. What Dr. Rall says as a historian is unequivocal and emphatic: "What Jesus hoped for from his death was not wanting. It did for men what his life alone had not accomplished. The cross, symbol of shame for that day like the guillotine or gallows for ours, became the center of the message of his disciples and the symbol of honor for the ages following. From the first, men saw in his death, as did he, not a tragic accident or the triumph of his foes, but some great purpose of God" (136).

4. The writers are charged with denying "the central fact in salvation . . .," "Justification by Faith," and "God's moral wrath toward sin." Professor Bowne specifically accepts and declares this doctrine on pp. 66, 67. He definitely declares that by faith he means trust in the grace of God. "There is no deeper or more vital truth in the moral and religious life." What he insists upon is that this "must be understood from the side of life. It must be vitally, ethically, spiritually apprehended." This is not Mr. Sloan's conception. What he insists upon is not faith in the grace of God as it comes to men in Christ. It is acceptance of a theological theory, a doctrine of the atonement; not the recognition that Christ died for men, but a theory about that death. He declares there can be no justification without a consciousness of this idea of a vicarious sacrifice (pamphlet 2, p. 5). At the heart of the gospel of grace in which faith trusts is the death of Christ, but this insistence upon the recognition of a theory is a piece of intellectualism that is as foreign to the gospel

as it is to the spirit of Methodism. No wonder he has no gospel for childhood. The evangelical doctrine from Paul on is the declaration that man is saved by no merit of his own but solely through faith (an obedient, self-surrendering trust) in the grace of God. And this is explicitly taught by Clarke (403-408), and Bowne (66, 67). Mr. Sloan makes the grave charge that this doctrine is not set forth in Coe, Athearn, or Meyer. No, nor will he find its discussion in Weigle, to whom he makes no objection. It is found fully set forth just where it should be, in the texts on systematic theology.

5. Much the same thing needs to be said about the divinity of Christ. Sweeping statements are made about the denial of the divinity of Christ, and repeated by others in even more sweeping form. What is the basis for these charges? Only two books are cited, neither of them in theology. One of them is not now in the Course, the other was placed in the Course by the bishops ten years ago. Neither of these deny the divinity of Christ. Rauschenbusch emphasizes certain aspects in the human experience of Jesus. The objection to these raises the serious question whether Mr. Sloan is not guilty of the heresy upon which the ancient church passed summary judgment, the denial of the humanity of our Lord, or at least, in his own phrase, "a whittling away." As a matter of fact, no former Course has ever had any clearer teaching upon the subject of the divinity of our Lord than this Course gives in the texts which take up this theme: Sheldon (192-212, 325-359), Clarke (260-308), Bowne (87-105), and Simpson (103-138).

Thus Bowne says: "Our Lord had existed before his incarnation. He had been rich, rich in the ineffable divine fellowship of the Father with the Son, rich in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. As Paul declares in another passage, our Lord had originally been in the form of God, yet had not thought equality with God a thing to be insisted upon, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. * * * And all was done in order that by this infinite love and sacrifice we might be lifted up to God. * * * This in brief is the doctrine of the incarnation and atonement as continuously told by the Christian Church, with scantiest variations, from its beginnings until now. It is the essential doctrine of Christianity and the abiding source of its power" (p. 88).

Clarke is no less positive and clear: "During his life the presence of something more than human had made itself felt. . . . After his death came the divine surprise of his resur-

rection, then his ascension, then the day of Pentecost. On that day his friends recognized Jesus as exalted to the right hand of God, and exerting divine power upon men." The divine honor accorded him "sprang from the recognition of divine qualities in him, and from the sense of his living and reigning as a Saviour which the Church had after Pentecost . . . With them, Christianity was faith in a divine Christ who was doing divine work upon sinful men" (pp. 285, 286). It is not necessary to quote Sheldon or the helpful and convincing discussion of Carnegie Simpson. To fling reckless accusations against such men on this point is little less than a crime. To repeat such accusations without knowledge or investigation is to share in the offense.

The only other material introduced in this new pamphlet consists of copies of various resolutions. These add nothing and bring only general declarations, none of them evincing first-hand knowledge of the matters at issue. The only specific item is a charge made by Dr. Harcourt W. Peck against Dr. Rall's *New Testament History*, based upon the statement in the Introduction that it is "written frankly from the modern historical point of view." On this basis, and without a single reference to the book itself, Dr. Peck identifies the author's position with the extremes of radical criticism. Why did he not quote the words of the author immediately following? "This book does not concern itself primarily with critical processes. Using the assured results of sober study, it aims to set forth reverently and constructively the great facts of this early history." In this spirit it studies "this great current of life, which was at once the greatest revelation of the divine Spirit and the greatest movement of the human spirit that mankind has known" (9, 10).

Dr. Faulkner's Criticism of Clarke

A few words may be given to an article by Professor Faulkner offering certain criticisms of Clarke's *Theology*. It should be kept in mind that Dr. Faulkner disclaims the suggestion that Clarke be excluded from the Course.

1. As to the Bible, one need only compare Clarke with Faulkner himself to see the groundlessness of the criticism. Faulkner sums up his own opinion in two sentences: "The Bible, in its religious and moral parts, shows itself as inspired of God to the spiritually open mind just as the sun on a summer's midday shows itself as shining to the open eye." Compare Clarke, 44: "The quality of the Scriptures convinces us of a divine element

in them . . . The better we understand the Scriptures, the more intelligible does the inspiration of its writers become." Faulkner says: "The New Testament is organically connected with the foundation of Christianity and first diffusion of the Spirit." Clarke says: "In Christ he (God) came directly into humanity. By the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit he has made his practical and permanent abode . . . The Bible not only brings us this revelation of God, but exists in order to bring it" (28, cf. 24, 29).

2. On the atonement Clarke is in close agreement with Sheldon. Dr. Faulkner says he "follows Ritschl in making the center of God's nature love only." Not so. Clarke says: "God could not be love if he were not holy . . . Holiness is the glorious fulness of God's moral excellence, held as the principle of his own action and the standard for his creatures" (pp. 99, 89). As to the transfer of punishment, read *all* that Clarke says, and then find exactly the same position in Sheldon (Clarke, 331, also 341-344; Sheldon, 399).

3. As to justification, Clarke's treatment is not satisfactory and attention is called to this specifically in the Directions and Helps (Directions and Helps, Fourth Year, 150, 151). The question is in part a matter of the use of terms. Clarke fails to see that justification is essentially the same as forgiveness (see Wesley, Works, 1, 385). But Clarke's practical purpose is clear. It is the effort to do justice to the ethical and is much like that of Wesley in his famous Minute on Calvinism which brought him such fierce criticism. But Clarke affirms as strongly as Wesley did that salvation is by grace through faith and not by merit (Clarke, 407; Stevens, History of Methodism, 11, 32ff.).

4. As to the "Last Things," Clarke is in substantial agreement with Sheldon in rejecting premillennialism and in the idea of the spiritual return and presence of our Lord.

It would be most desirable if Clarke himself could be read by those to whom such criticisms come. They would understand how it gained the enthusiastic approval of such men as Bishops Andrews, Vincent, and Goodsell when it first appeared, not to speak of equally notable leaders of our church now in active service, and why it has been more widely read than any other systematic theology that America has produced. Two qualities make it especially valuable for this Course. It is written in simple and direct English, not in a theological dialect; and it is profoundly religious, reflecting in this respect the reverent and devout spirit of its author.

Two General Considerations

In almost all this criticism, two important considerations have been overlooked.

1. Books are not included in the Course because every detail of opinion in them is approved. The Course of Study is handled in the same manner as in any good school for training preachers. The books are first of all selected because adapted to teach their special subject. Doctrinally they must be in essential harmony with the position of the Church. At the same time the student must be made familiar with the best thought of the day, and must learn to handle the problems that he will meet as a leader and teacher of men. He must be taught to think, to discriminate. The Course is not intended to give him a set of ready-made opinions to be taken without thinking and for the rest of his life to be handed over to his people equally without thought. Such an attitude may fit Roman Catholicism but not Protestantism.

This position is generally recognized. Professor Faulkner definitely stands for it. It is well stated in the discriminating discussion of the Direction and Helps by Dr. Oscar L. Joseph, which appeared in the *Methodist Review*. In contrast is the hypercriticism which we have been considering. A book on How to Study is put in the "Index" because of a casual reference to native depravity (and that misinterpreted). Ellwood's fine work on The Social Problem is a genuinely spiritual protest against "an egoistic and materialistic social philosophy" and one much needed to-day, but because it looks at human history from the standpoint of its social development it is condemned as representing the dangerous idea of evolution. Rauschenbusch's stirring work, placed in the Course by the bishops ten years ago, is the outstanding book for the student who wants to understand the modern social development in religious thought, and has contributed more to this development than any other volume. It is condemned because of objections to incidentally expressed biblical opinions.

2. A second and very important consideration is the part played by the Directions and Helps. This essential part of the plan, indicated in the Discipline and emphasized in all the matter put forth by the Commission, has been entirely ignored by the New Jersey Conference critics. Of these volumes, ranging from 165 to 200 pages, one accompanies each year of the Course. It gives guidance to the student, directs his work, and gives necessary explanations and comments upon the books. It seeks to give the

aid furnished by a wise teacher in the class room. For example, when Dr. Faulkner's colleague used Clarke as a text-book in his classes in systematic theology in Drew Seminary, he presumably did not coincide with all its positions. So it happens that in two points made by Dr. Faulkner against Dr. Clarke, it will be found that the Directions and Helps have offered criticism and referred the student to Sheldon. Similar comments may be found in connection with Rauschenbusch and Soares. In general, they aim to point out what is of value, to give explanation and quicken interest, to advise and caution as may be needed, and to lead the student to think for himself.

III.

Waiting Tasks

It is a regrettable necessity that has demanded so much space for the mere refutation of criticism, and yet the discussion has served to indicate the general principles of the new plan. It remains now to point out some of the work that waits to be done, and to ask for suggestion and coöperation in the doing of this work. The Board of Education has just completed its great campaign and added many millions of greatly needed funds to the endowment of our schools. These schools can make no higher claim to our regard than their service in training leaders for the Church. But here, in this Conference Course of Study, is the instrument upon which we must depend for the training of three times as many men as come to our ranks from the theological schools. We must give far more thought to this work, and we must spend more money upon it.

Here are a few of the important matters to be considered:

1. We must develop better materials for study, text-books that will be suited to the needs and capacities of men who have not had college training and who must work by themselves. The recent legislation of the General Conference has excused the men who are graduates of both college and seminary from taking the Course. Our candidates who graduate from college for the most part are taking the seminary course also. This leaves us free to fit the Course to the untrained or partly trained men. The successful correspondence schools of to-day indicate how the books for such men should be written. The style should be clear and simple. Special attention must be paid to the arrangement

of the matter. Every effort should be made to make the material interesting, and to tie it up to the problems and tasks of the young preacher's daily work. Adequate explanations and suggestions should accompany. Above all, the student should be given regular written exercises, which will insure real study and give him the chance to express himself. The best men available should be secured for the preparation of this material.

2. We must magnify the work of the Conference Board of Examiners. We must set up for them a new ideal, an ideal which progressive Boards here and there have already reached. These men should seek to establish the closest relations with the students, serving as instructors, advisers, and friends. The name of the Board might well be changed to Conference Board of Instruction, the examinations being but one aspect of this work.

3. Through the establishment of some central agency, or by relating it to our theological schools, it might be possible to establish regular correspondence school work, and those students who so desire might take their work in this manner, the annual conference accepting the certification of such agency as it does now in the case of college or seminary.

4. For the men who have completed the Course, there should be produced graduate courses of study from among which they might select some field in which to continue systematic work.

5. Annual reading lists might be published, for those who wished guidance in finding books most worth while.

6. A department might be established in the Methodist Review devoted to all these interests, serving as the agency of publicity, and perhaps furnishing each year one of the graduate courses.

7. Summer schools should be encouraged, either conference schools such as are already being held in some quarters, or schools supported by a larger area such as the state school which the Ohio conferences initiated this summer in such successful manner. These schools should be for the young men in the Course and for older ministers, should continue at least ten days, should have generous financial support, and should command the ablest instructors and lecturers available, at the same time giving opportunity for the personal contact of examiners and students.

8. A final problem is to be noted that has received practically no attention as yet. That is the case of our supplies. Over against nearly one fourth of our charges there stands printed in the conference minutes, "To be supplied." For the most part, that means that these churches are to be taken care of by men

who cannot measure up even to the low minimum standards which prevail so generally. What is being done for the training of these men? The welfare of four thousand Methodist churches in this country "left to be supplied" is largely dependent upon these men. The large majority of them have presumably the status of local preacher. How much training did they get through the local preachers' course? How much attention is given to the men that are taking that course? How much reading and studying do these men do after they have finished that course?

It is hardly feasible to require these regular supplies to take the conference course. Many would not be equal to it in point of training, many of them must supplement their meager salary by other work and have little time. In some cases the preaching is simply a service assumed in addition to some regular task like that of farming. On the other hand, every possible help should be given these men for the sake of the churches to which they minister. Might it not be possible to devise a course, simpler than the conference course, but more thorough than the local preachers' course, and require at least the younger men as they take up the work of regular supplies to complete such a course? And could this not be placed under the conference board of examiners? Whatever may be done, here at least is one of the problems worthy of serious attention.

These statements and suggestions do not come as formal recommendations of the Commission on Courses of Study. They are simply indications of large and important matters that await solution. What the Commission would do is to ask the serious attention of the Church to these questions, and to invite the cooperation of all concerned in a common effort to solve them.

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